



## NORTHERN ROCKIES COORDINATING GROUP

Date: July 25, 2003

Reply to: (agency file designation)

To: Agency Head

Subject: Northern Rockies Coordinating Group Fire Severity Authorization

The Northern Rockies geographic area is submitting a fire severity request of for each of the cooperating wildland fire agencies. Each Agency is expected to monitor their local situation and to use only the portions of the severity authorization that are needed and reasonable. These resources will be hosted by a District, Forest, Zone, or Refuge and could be relocated as conditions dictate. They will shared between agencies to meet the demands of the fire situation across the geographic area.

**1. Area Affected.**

Northern Rockies Geographic Area.

**2. How do fire conditions exceed those upon which the current fire management program is based in both duration and magnitude?**

Based on the 30-day Fire and Weather Assessment August 1- 31<sup>st</sup>: In general across the geographic area ERCs are running well above normal for the time period and are at or above all-time highs. For comparison, most stations are well above the indices established in 2000 which has an extreme fire season for the area.

### **North Idaho**

Only a few precipitation events have occurred over the last four weeks and they have been mainly over southern portions of the zone. Some stations in northern areas have had no measureable precipitation during this time. Large fuel moisture is far below normal for this time of the year especially over the north. Windy conditions have been a contributing factor to a early curing of the fine fuels (2-3 weeks ahead in the normal seasonal curing process).

Outlook for August: Average temperatures are expected to be above normal with below normal precipitation. Above normal fire potential is projected.

### **Northwest Montana**

Little to no rain has fallen since mid-June. During the last 4 weeks, only one station has received a wetting rain (.1 inch). Extreme dry and windy conditions have accelrated the curing of fine fuels. E

ven higher north slope elevations have been reported to be below normal fuel moistures. Fire season has been estimated to be 2-3 weeks ahead of normal.

State of Montana  
Montana Firewardens Association  
Montana Division of Disaster  
and Emergency Services

Bureau of Indian Affairs  
Bureau of Land Management  
National Park Service  
US Fish and Wildlife Service

USDA Forest Service  
State of Idaho  
North Dakota Forest Service  
Fire Chief's Association

Outlook for August: Temperatures will be above normal. Precipitation is expected to be below normal for the Kootenai region and near normal for the Flathead and Glacier Park. Above normal fire potential is projected.

### **Southwest Montana**

Across the zone, precipitation has been well below normal for most of June and thus far in July. Persistent dry air and periodic windy conditions have quickly cured the fuels and have reduced large fuel moisture significantly over the last 3 weeks.

Outlook for August: Temperatures are expected to be above normal. Precipitation: below normal for the northern zone (FWX zones 106 107) and near normal for the south (FWX zones 108 109). Above normal fire potential is projected.

### **Central Montana**

Very dry fuel conditions throughout the entire zone (8-14% 1000 hr fuels moisture).

Precipitation has been localized with many stations reporting less than 10% of normal for the last 3 weeks. Severe drought conditions have returned to northern sections of the zone. Portions of the south continue to experience extreme drought conditions.

Outlook for August: Temperatures are expected to be above normal with near normal precipitation. Above normal fire potential is projected.

### **South Central Montana**

Fuel moistures are below normal at all elevations with earlier-than-normal curing of fine fuels. Latest ground truth 1000 hr fuel moisture samples in Yellowstone park indicated 2-10%.

Precipitation amounts are extremely low over the last 4 weeks with the exception of the Park where some precipitation has fallen. Record temperatures have also been achieved.

Outlook for August: Temperatures are expected to be above normal. Precipitation: below normal for the Park and near normal for the rest of the zone. Above normal fire potential is projected.

### **Eastern Montana**

Fire potential has increased significantly over southern portions of the zone due to the return of very dry and hot conditions. Northern portions have had periodic precipitation events especially the northeast where near normal amounts have been observed. Large fuel moisture measurements are below normal for this time of the season.

Outlook for August: Temperatures are expected to be above normal. Precipitation: below normal for the southern portion of the zone and near normal for the north. Above normal fire potential is projected for southeast section of the zone.

### **North Dakota**

Southwest and south-central North Dakota have been measuring well below normal precipitation amounts. However, periodic light precipitation events and higher dew point temperatures helped to keep fire potential moderate. Fuel moistures are the lowest in this portion of North Dakota. Curing of the cold-weather grasses has occurred and is contributing to high fire danger at this

time. The rest of the state has done quite well with slightly below normal temperatures and near normal precipitation.

Outlook for August: Temperatures near normal. Precipitation near normal except for below normal over southwest North Dakota. Fire potential is projected normal.

**3. Adjustments of Regional/State forces and funds that have been made or are planned.**

Regional forces of the BLM, Forest Service, BIA, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife are committed at this time to initial attack or large fire support. The State of Montana has activated the National Guard to supply helicopter support and has invoked its compact with Minnesota to pre-position resources from that state.

**4. Cooperators' fire situation and status of forces.**

Cooperators are assisting in large fire suppression efforts with teams and resources for both State and Federal fires. Initial attack is requiring an unusual amount of resources on each incident to be successful.

**5. Current status of Regional/State fire preparedness funds and an estimate of when these funds will be fully obligated.**

All funds have been planned for expenditure in preparedness.

**6. The amount and purpose of the requested authorization, including description, period, and cost of forces, equipment, and contracts.**

This request is for the period August 1 – August 31, 2003.

| Description       | BLM No. | BLM Cost | FWS No. | FWS Cost | FS No. | FS Cost   | BIA No. | BIA Cost | NPS No. | NPS Cost | IDL No. | IDL Cost | DNRC No. | DNRC Cost | NDS No. | NDS Cost | Total Cost |
|-------------------|---------|----------|---------|----------|--------|-----------|---------|----------|---------|----------|---------|----------|----------|-----------|---------|----------|------------|
| SEATS             |         |          |         |          | 8      | \$240,000 | 1       | 99,000   |         |          |         |          |          |           |         |          | 339,000    |
| Helicopters       |         |          |         |          | 9      | 657,000   |         |          |         |          |         |          | 4        | 133,000   |         |          | 790,000    |
| Air Attack/Recon  |         |          |         |          | 5      | 240,000   |         |          |         |          |         |          |          |           |         |          | 240,000    |
| Engines           |         |          |         |          | 26     | 485,000   | 25      | 222,000  |         |          |         |          | 7        | 72,000    |         |          | 779,000    |
| Water Tenders     |         |          |         |          |        |           |         |          |         |          |         |          | 1        | 16,000    |         |          | 16,000     |
| Dozers            |         |          |         |          | 7      | 140,000   |         |          |         |          |         |          | 1        | 128,000   |         |          | 268,000    |
| T2 Crews          |         |          |         |          | 7      | 210,000   |         |          |         |          |         |          |          |           |         |          | 210,000    |
| Leadership        |         |          |         |          |        | 209,000   |         | 16,000   |         | 40,000   |         |          |          |           |         |          | 265,000    |
| Extended Staffing |         |          | 8       | \$60,900 |        | 525,000   |         |          |         | 50,000   |         |          |          |           |         |          | 635,900    |
| Detection         |         |          | 8       | 7,900    |        | 14,000    |         |          |         |          |         |          |          |           |         |          | 21,900     |
| Prevention        |         |          | 1       | 2,500    | 39     | 398,000   |         |          |         |          |         |          | 5        | 30,000    |         |          | 430,500    |
| I.A. Module       |         |          |         |          | 8      | 115,000   |         |          |         |          |         |          |          |           |         |          | 115,000    |
| CL-215            |         |          |         |          | 1      | 105,000   |         |          |         |          |         |          | 2        | 130,000   |         |          | 235,000    |
| Air Tanker        |         |          |         |          |        |           |         |          |         |          |         |          |          |           |         |          |            |
| Dispatchers       |         |          |         |          |        |           |         |          |         |          |         |          | 1        | 2,000     |         |          | 2,000      |
| <b>Total</b>      |         | 343,000  |         | 71,300   |        | 3238,000  |         | 337,000  |         | 90,000   |         |          |          | 511,000   |         |          | 4,347,300  |

**7. The latest Palmer Drought Index map.**

See Appendix 1 for map.

Almost all of the geographic area is in the severe to extreme drought range.

**8. The latest 30 and 90-day outlook maps for precipitation and temperature.**

See Appendix 2 for map.

Warm, dry conditions are expected to persist.

**9. The latest map showing the current month departure from normal precipitation and temperature.**

See Appendix 3-1 and 3-2 for map.

In general, June and July have resulted in below normal precipitation which was preceded by a very dry winter and the area is in a persistent drought.

**10. A graph of the current year energy release component (ERC).**

See Appendix 4.

Most of the composite stations across the area are at or above record highs for the date and many are substantially exceeding the conditions present in 2000.

**11. A narrative regarding how fire prevention personnel and fire prevention activities will be used.**

The local areas are all preparing plans and bring on additional fire prevention personnel. Also included in this request is a Prevention Team to coordinate activities in a unified manner across the geographic area. Fire restrictions are in place and there is a strong possibility many areas will move to area closures by mid-August.

Please contact Dennis Milburn at 406-329-3266 if there are questions regarding this request.

All NRCG member agencies concur with the content and need of this request.

*/s/ Brian Shiplett*

BRIAN SHIPLETT

Chair, Northern Rockies Coordinating Group

Enclosures: Appendix 1-4